



ADUR & WORTHING
COUNCILS

Joint Strategic Committee
6 February 2025

Key Decision: Yes

Ward(s) Affected: Central

Worthing Public Realm - Delivering Montague Gardens

Report by the Assistance Director for Place & Economy

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Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with the opportunity to formally collaborate with West Sussex County Council (WSCC) in the mutually agreed regeneration of Montague Place.
- 1.2. To outline the required capital funding for the development of a new town centre public realm scheme in its place, Montague Gardens.
- 1.3. To ensure that Members are thoroughly informed regarding the WSCC/Growth Deal business rates funding contribution that supports the scheme.
- 1.4. To note the release of previously agreed Worthing Borough Council (WBC) Community Infrastructure Levy funding at £2.7m.

- 1.5. To recognise the importance of Montague Gardens as a key connection to and from the seafront, to the town centre, and therefore a key anchor point as part of a new strategy to support our incredible seafront and to help it thrive into the future.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Joint Strategic Committee is recommended to:
 - 2.1.1. Approve the collaboration between WSCC and WBC in the delivery of Montague Gardens, noting WBC responsibility for project management and scheme delivery; supported by the WSCC Growth Deal Officers.
 - 2.1.2. Authorise the acceptance of Pooled Business Rates, £300k funding with up to a further £100k available to underwrite the scheme's capital budget as required, subject to successful s278 technical approval and traffic regulation order (TRO).
 - 2.1.3. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Place & Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, the authority to approve and award a contract for the construction of the public realm project, subject to the outcome of a compliant procurement process.
 - 2.1.4. Approve the increase of £400k to the capital programme budget, funded by Pooled Business Rates funding of £400k. This will bring the budget available to the delivery phase to a total of £3.1m.

3. Context

- 3.1. The Adur and Worthing Growth Deal (A&WG), signed in March 2017, identified up to 8 public realm schemes aimed at supporting the regeneration of Worthing town centre. The agreed programme included initial funding from WSCC Capital Programme (£5m) with the remainder being sourced through developer contributions, to include Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL); planning obligations (Section

106) and grants and available pooled business rates to support delivery of later phases of the programme.

- 3.2. The delivery of the Worthing Public Realm programme is overseen by an officer and member group, namely the Public Realm Board. The Public Realm Board is a joint WBC and WSCC Board. This programme of public realm delivery was born out of the Worthing Investment Prospectus (2016).
- 3.3. The Montague Place public realm project is the third scheme to move to fruition from the Adur & Worthing Growth Deal (2017). In partnership between WBC and WSCC the two completed schemes are Portland Road and most recently, Railway Approach. Responsibility for the delivery of these projects have alternated between authorities. Worthing Borough Council is delivering the new Montague Place, which has also received a name change for the area to Montague Gardens; a title better suiting the design and desired use of the space.
- 3.4. As a key town centre crossing point between the promenade and town centre retail, Montague Place has seen numerous changes in use and design over the years. In 2016 the northern section received some economic investment and works delivered by WSCC in partnership with Coast to Capital LEP. Latterly (in response to the Covid pandemic) the southern end of Montague Place was closed to vehicles and reopened for pedestrian use only. Funded through the central government Reopening High Street Safely Fund (RHSSF) the temporary changes supported the need for social distancing. Local cafes and restaurants expanded their trading, under new Pavement Licensing, into Montague Place creating a cafe culture featuring increased seating and sustainable planting.
- 3.5. The new Montague Gardens scheme features a design inspired by the seaside gardens that existed when Montague Place was first built in the 19th century. The emphasis is on increasing biodiversity with a green space that links the seafront to the nearby Liverpool Gardens. Improvements will be made to the large expanse of wall in the north eastern corner with the addition of a performance deck, instagram 'place signage' and green wall. The bespoke children's play area takes inspiration from the sea kelp restoration along Sussex Bay and is accompanied by outdoor dining, sustainable planting and 30 new trees.
- 3.6. Working alongside urban landscaping design and project management company Project Centre Ltd and following a thorough community and business consultation the design for the Montague Place received

leader approval in April 2024. Using a two stage procurement process for construction the first stage of a tender procedure was completed in November 2024; the second stage of procurement is currently underway and due for completion in early Spring 2025. WBC has recently submitted a s278 application to WSCC Highways, in addition to an accompanying Traffic Regulation Order. In essence the preparatory works for the scheme are nearing completion and onsite delivery is due to start in late Spring 2025.

4. Issues for consideration

- 4.1. On 12 September 2023 Worthing JSSCC recommended the use of £2.7m CIL funding for the Montague Gardens scheme. Following an extensive design phase, including phases of value engineering, the Montague Gardens concept design has now concluded and a draft construction budget created. This carefully considered budget set the cost of the project at just under £3m.
- 4.2. WSCC have approved £400k Pooled Business Rates funding to the scheme, subject to the conclusion of Highways agreements. This is formed of a direct £300k fund to WBC, followed by (up to) an additional £100k which may be used to underwrite the project in its current design. The project budget has good contingency and optimism bias within the £3m. This report seeks the authority to accept this funding from WSCC for use on Montague Gardens.
- 4.3. The high level programme for the project is as follows:
 - Procurement - January to March 2025
 - Partner & Contractor Press Release - March/April 2025
 - Mobilisation - April/May 2025
 - Construction - Late Spring 2025 to Autumn 2026
- 4.4. Policy Alignment - the design for Montague Gardens aligns to the administration's values and desires for the wider electorate. The purposeful use of sustainable planting, areas for rest and relaxation, a platform for performance or screenings, a bespoke play area for families to enjoy and safer pedestrian access to the Promenade evidences the **people centred** approach to new urban landscaping in Worthing.
- 4.5. It should also be noted the importance of Montague Place / Gardens as a key connector between the town centre and the seafront, and this

new scheme will further enhance that connection. This scheme represents an important first step of investment to establish a longer term plan for the seafront, which includes how investment will be sourced to support its future, including for Worthing Pier and Lido as notable assets.

5. Engagement and Communication

- 5.1. Throughout the design stages the Council has actively engaged in a thorough and considered consultation process with residents, access groups, local business, stakeholders and members. As well as a series of individual walkabouts, a 'world café' at Montague Quarter, allowed stakeholders to discuss the design and shape the concept. Based on this feedback, Project Centre Ltd refined the plans. The design aligned closely with the feedback and the aspirations of the Members. To validate this, the Council held another public consultation in June/July 2023 to confirm the findings.
- 5.2. Throughout all stages, the Council has seen strong participation, with constructive feedback and insightful discussions. The final consultation took place over four weeks, from 7 June to 5 July 2023, during which the public was encouraged to fill out an online form, garnering more than 100 responses.
- 5.3. Council Cabinet members, supported by Neighbourhood Project Officers, have proactively sought to consult and communicate directly with businesses and residents in Montague Place. Physical information panels, web and social media updates and regular newsletters will form to create a communications plan during the construction phase as a means to inform the community and visitors, and to reduce disturbance to those living and working in the area.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. At the 13th of July 2021 meeting of the Joint Strategic Committee an initial budget of £200k was approved for phase 2, main design works funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This work was carried out to inform design proposals. Subsequently following these works at the 12th September 2023 meeting of the Joint Strategic Sub Committee (Worthing) a further budget of £2.7m was approved for the works to be funded by CIL.

- 6.2. Considering the design phased closed the active budget available to the project is £2.7m (less any committed spend during the current financial year). The agreement of WSCC to use pooled business rates funding of £400k enables this project's budget to be extended by £400k whilst remaining fully funded. There is currently no anticipated overspend, meaning there are no costs of borrowing to be considered.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1. Under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council has the power to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or which is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.
- 7.2. Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 1999 contains a general duty on a best value authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 7.3. Section 1 Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997 confers power on the local authority to enter into a contract for the provision of making available of assets or services for the purposes of, or in connection with, the discharge of the function by the local authority.
- 7.4. In procuring for a preferred contractor, the Council is required to follow a lawful process as required by its Contract Standing Orders and have regard to the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Concession Contracts Regulations 2016. All the terms of the proposed arrangement are to be set out in a fair and transparent manner to all potential bidders.

Background Papers

- [2023.09.12 - WJSSC - agenda item 11 - Montague Place](#)
- [Montague Place Engagement Report](#)

Sustainability & Risk Assessment

1. Economic

- Public realm improvements are important to create the right setting for our town centres and economy, including our business base, to operate. Not only does this project represent an opportunity for our businesses, it will also provide alternate possibilities for 'open space' activities, including events and markets.
- The aforementioned activities are vital to support and revitalise our changing high streets; even more so in response to the current economic uncertainty. Public realm improvements at Montague Place/Gardens, and future schemes, will support and give confidence to residents and visitors regarding the outdoor environment, and show these places need to be cared for and improved.

2. Social

2.1 Social Value

- The scheme will enhance the open space at Montague Gardens, benefiting both local businesses and community groups. It will improve the town centre experience for residents and visitors, promote walking and cycling, and support overall wellbeing. These changes will help make Worthing town centre more vibrant and socially valuable.
- New public realm spaces with more greening help prevent anti-social behaviour by creating inviting environments that encourage positive social interaction. Green areas promote a sense of community, improve mental well-being, and foster a collective responsibility for public spaces. Well-maintained, open spaces also increase natural surveillance, reducing opportunities for disruptive activity. Additionally, green spaces provide safe, calming environments that reduce stress and isolation, ultimately supporting safer, more inclusive communities and deterring anti-social behaviours.

2.2 Equality Issues

- The design for Montague Gardens has included specific consultation with accessible groups and organisations. This consultation, and wider equality points, have been considered and will be implemented further as the project progresses through detailed design, procurement and delivery.

2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

- The improved public realm works will fully consider crime and disorder act implications through the detailed design phase of the project. Consideration will also be given to the ongoing environment that the new public realm will create in relation to providing a safe and enjoyable space.

2.4 Human Rights Issues

- Town centre public realm promotes the right to participate in cultural, social, and recreational activities, supporting well-being and mental health. By prioritising accessibility and fostering a sense of community, such schemes help uphold the right to live in dignity, free from discrimination, and contribute to a more equitable society.
- The improvements at Montague Gardens will require significant construction work. During this period it's anticipated there will be disruption to local residents and businesses in the immediate area. WBC, with guidance from the appointed design team and contractors, will assess the impacts throughout and consider mitigating actions to reduce the disruption where possible. The phased approach to construction will be clearly advertised.

3. Environmental

- The design for Montague Gardens holds environmental improvements as a central theme. The new scheme includes a living wall, drought resistant planting, SUDs drainage and fully recycled spoil. 30 new trees will also be planted, increasing oxygenation and providing shade in the Summer months.
- The design also supports and encourages improvement to active travel. Providing improved walking and cycling infrastructure.
- A further consideration is ensuring, where possible, that resources, materials and contractors are sourced as local as possible, therefore reducing the overall carbon footprint of the scheme.

4. Governance

- The Growth Board and Public Realm Board are existing and functional, and they will act as the key governance control for this project. These will have strict oversight of all elements of the project, including spend and programme.
- The CIL Board will also be kept informed of the project as CIL will be the funding source for the scheme.
- A Decision notice will be published prior to an award to contract the build contractor, as per the council's standing orders.